

northern New Jersey, no fax machines, no ATM machines.

Now my colleagues can say, well, why did this happen. We had families who were unable to check in on their loved ones, whether children checking in on their parents or vice versa if they lived out of town. We had patients unable to find their doctors, doctors unable to reach their patients. We had businesses unable to communicate with their customers, the customers with their businesses, suppliers with businesses.

How could this have happened? Well, I have asked that we undertake a Federal inquiry into how a vital industry, a vital utility such as the phone company, could have permitted or how they handled in fact Floyd's aftermath with so many million people and more without phone service for 3, 4, 5 days.

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Tens of millions of dollars were lost in terms of business alone, notwithstanding all of the heartache and emotional isolation felt by so many in my communities.

Well, the switching facility is apparently located near a body of water that had flooded and overflowed its banks in 1977. We are going to learn more about the details, but it is critical that in the year 1999 we find out why there was no redundancy, no duplication of switching devices, which would have prevented all together this tremendous lack of telephone service and the lack of disruption and damage to people's lives and businesses.

I am meeting with representatives from the phone company tomorrow. And we have a great many dedicated men and women who work for the telephone companies who did their utmost to prevent disruption, but I am afraid that there may need to be a new way of thinking on behalf of those planning for the worst. Y2K, the year 2000, is coming upon us. There are always the potentialities for accidents or, God forbid, terrorist incidents. If we are not prepared in the metropolitan area of New York and New Jersey for these kinds of disasters, natural and human-kind, what can we look forward to around the country? That is why we are conducting a federal investigation and will hold hearings on what could have been done to prevent that kind of tragedy.

As my time runs out, I just want to say to the people of New Jersey that we are fighting here in Congress for them, and I ask my colleagues to join me.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to proceed for an additional minute.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ADERHOLT). The Chair is unable to recognize that request.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. SISISKY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SISISKY. Mr. Speaker, I commend my friend, Congresswoman CLAYTON, for taking time to discuss these terrible floods.

I saw her on television with the President when they visited some of the devastated areas in North Carolina.

Late last week, I visited southeast Virginia with our Governor, where we witnessed identical devastation.

I have to confess, I've never seen anything like it. To be faced with back-to-back drought and flood is simply overwhelming.

But our job is to see that these rural areas, communities, families, and businesses are not overwhelmed.

That is going to be a very big job.

Most of the rivers in and along my district are either right at flood stage or significantly over.

The upper Nottaway River was just below flood stage at Rawlings.

But by the time it got to the town of Stony Creek, 25 miles away, it was twelve feet above flood stage.

West of Petersburg, in Matoaca, the Appomattox was holding steady right at flood stage.

The Meherrin River was right at flood stage in Lawrenceville, but over two feet above flood stage by the time it got to Emporia.

I think most of you have seen news reports from Franklin, in the center of my district, where the Blackwater River crested about sixteen feet over flood stage and left most of the city completely under water.

And the effects of this flood have hurt communities like Portsmouth in ways that defy description.

Thankfully, the water is back on, and the same goes for communities in the Petersburg area.

With all this flood water spilling into water treatment facilities, not only were we warned to boil water, Portsmouth was warned to not drink the water even if it was boiled.

I think all of you know, it's one thing to lose electricity. That's bad enough.

But it's a whole different animal to lose your water over an extended period of time.

And in addition to electricity and water, we lost many major highways. Well over two hundred roads, along with interstates, were closed across southside Virginia.

And they stayed that way over the weekend as we waited for rivers and streams to crest, and then subside, so crews could remove debris.

Interstates 64 and 95 were closed, preventing travel to Hampton Roads and North Carolina.

The major highway across my district, U.S. 460, was under several feet of water in several locations.

Interstate 264 was open around Portsmouth, but with some ramps closed due to flood water.

Even highways that are open, like U.S. Routes 13 and 17, were closed at the Carolina border.

And in counties and communities where you can at least get around: Suffolk, Surry, Sussex, Southampton and Greenville, traffic was limited so cleanup crews could get in to make essential repairs.

Many streets in Chesapeake are still flooded.

I'm not going to belabor this any more—but as of today, the Internet list of closed roads is five pages long.

On top of that, we've got phone systems out and simply can't always call, even to check on loved ones.

That brings me to one thing I've got to say: Thank you and God bless all the emergency workers, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency folks and other Federal employees, to the State agencies, especially the National Guard—from the logistics operations to the helicopter pilots, and the VA Department of Transportation, to the local sheriffs and police and fire departments and rescue squads.

And I would also be remiss not to mention Red Cross and the hundreds of volunteers working with them and similar organizations.

I'm afraid we sometimes take these people for granted, but I doubt that anyone in Southside or North Carolina will ever make that mistake again.

Mr. Speaker, if the rain ever stops, we'll need to think about the future.

Drying out and restoring homes and communities will take time and a lot of hard work.

If the Federal, State and local partnership we've seen in the face of this emergency continues over the long term, we'll be in good shape.

One thing we need to do is make sure that in addition to the families, homeowners and businesses in our cities and towns, we remember the devastation this inflicts on rural areas and farmers and agribusiness.

It is my understanding that a Presidential Disaster Declaration carries far more weight than a Secretarial Declaration.

And I'm talking USDA, not FEMA.

I have already contacted the White House to request that areas affected by these floods receive all Federal assistance possible.

If that means we need a full-scale Presidential Disaster Declaration from USDA, that's what I want.

After the President went down there yesterday, I'm sure they would have done that anyway.

But this thing is just so big, so unbelievable, we need to do all we can to help these people get back on their feet.

As I said, this will take a lot of work over a long period of time, but now is the time to begin.

HURRICANE FLOYD

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I would be happy to yield a moment to my colleague from New Jersey if he has more to add.

Mr. ROTHMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend and colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT).

I just wanted to say that we have people without drinking water who must boil their drinking water and still people without power or phone service. So this is, as my colleague knows, because he has spent so much time over the last few days working on this, this is a real tragedy. The local people, the police, fire, ambulance, emergency services, the people in the power companies and phone companies have done their best to rally.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the time. Together, we in Congress can help these people and rebuild our communities.

Mr. HULSHOF. My colleague is absolutely right, and I thank him for those remarks, and I am sure the people of New Jersey appreciate it.

Our hearts do go out to victims in other States. New Jersey has been hard hit. Many States in the East have been hard hit. As the flood waters receded across New Jersey, the death toll from Hurricane Floyd increased in our State. Surging flood waters caused hundreds of millions of dollars of damage and claimed four lives.

As officials struggled to cope with the thousands of refugees and families left to deal with contaminated drinking water and total devastation, in many cases, of their homes, we also have to deal with highway closures and lingering phone and power outages, which interfere with the ability to deal with the problems that families face.

Eight of the counties hardest hit by Floyd have been declared federal disaster areas, including three counties in my district in Central New Jersey, including Middlesex, Mercer, and Somerset Counties. In a number of places the flooding exceeded the boundaries of the hundred-year flood.

Over the past few days, I have seen firsthand the damage that the hurricane has caused. In Lambertville, for example, I toured the middle school, where water had flowed through the school. Mud covered the floors. There were floating school supplies and overturned and floating desks through the building. Officials there told me they expect the cleanup effort to cost up to \$1.5 million just in that one school.

In Branchburg, I have watched as families shoveled mud from their living areas, their shops, their basements, their belongings ruined, and homes permanently damaged. There was water everywhere but none to drink, as flooding contaminated drinking water sources. Still many people are without drinking water. They are advised to boil water. More than 200,000 residents in my district were found without water.

The scenes of devastation, however, did bring forth tails of heroic rescues. Many men and women devoted many exhausting hours to the rescue efforts, and they are to be commended. In this time of devastation, it gives us some comfort to think of the men and women of New Jersey who thought first of their neighbors. This inextinguishable spirit of the citizens of New Jersey has burned brightly in the days of this disaster, and it will continue to burn brightly. But that will not restore the damage caused by Hurricane Floyd.

There will be time in the coming weeks to talk about lessons learned from the flooding, and there are lessons to be drawn from this, lessons about the effect of loss of open space on flooding. But for now our attention goes to assisting the victims of the flood and to extolling the work of the rescue and repair efforts of those involved in those efforts.

While the federal disaster declaration is a substantial step forward in helping

central New Jerseyans start to put their lives back together, more assistance is necessary. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting a legislative package to provide relief to the citizens that have been hurt and whose lives have been turned upside down by Hurricane Floyd.

MANAGED CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Iowa (Mr. GANSKE) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. GANSKE. Well, Mr. Speaker, it is a sobering time to be here on the floor and to listen to my colleagues describe the natural disaster that has occurred all along the East Coast from Hurricane Floyd. On behalf of the people of Iowa that I represent, and the entire State of Iowa, we extend our condolences and our sympathies.

We remember very well 6 years ago when we had the floods of the century in our State. I represent Des Moines, Iowa, and we were without water, drinkable water for over 3 weeks. So we understand the problems that people are having, and our hearts go out to the families of people who were lost in this terrible storm.

My State received a lot of help from States around the country, including those on the East Coast. I am sure that we have plans to reciprocate that generosity, and we certainly received our share of federal help in terms of FEMA disaster aid when we had our floods, and I will certainly support helping our neighbors on the East Coast with their terrible problems as well.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak a little bit about managed care reform tonight. I was very pleased when on this Friday past the Speaker of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. HASTERT), said that we will have a debate here in the House of Representatives the week of October 3. I would say that it is about time.

We had a very abbreviated debate last year on patient protection legislation. Really only had about an hour of debate on each of the bills. It was not a debate that did this House a lot of credit, and I hope that the debate we will have in 2 weeks will be a much better one and a fair one as well.

I do not expect that it will be easy for those of us who want to see comprehensive managed care reform pass the House. I suspect we will see a lot of amendments. There will be a lot of debate on alternatives. But I firmly believe that a vast majority of the Members of the House of Representatives want to pass a strong patient protection piece of legislation.

We watched the debate that occurred in the other House a few months ago, and a large number of us were very disappointed that the other House did not pass a more substantive bill. We are going to get our chance here in the next couple of weeks.

Why is this important? Well, for months I have been coming to the floor at least once a week to talk about the need for managed care reform. I have talked about a lot of different cases. And as I think about the people that have appeared before my committee, the Committee on Commerce, or that have appeared before other committees, victims of managed care abuses, I think about a family from California, where a father and his children came. Their mother was not with them because she had been denied treatment by her HMO, and it had cost her her life.

I think about a young woman who fell off a cliff, just 60 or so miles from Washington. She lay at the foot of that cliff with a broken skull, broken arm, and broken pelvis. She was air-flighted to a hospital, and then the HMO denied payment because she had not phoned for prior authorization.

I think about a young mother who was taking care of her little infant, a 6-month-old boy, who had a temperature of 104 or 105. And she did all the things she was supposed to with her HMO. She phoned the HMO. And the HMO spokesperson said, well, we will authorize you to take little Jimmy to an emergency room, but the only one we are going to authorize is 60, 70 miles away.

So little Jimmy's mother and father were driving him to a hospital. They had only been authorized to go to one hospital. They had to pass three other hospital emergency rooms enroute, and then he had a cardiac arrest and his mother tried to keep him alive as his dad was driving frantically to the emergency room.

They got him to the emergency room and a nurse runs out, and the mother leaps out of the car with her little baby and screams, Help me, help me. The nurse starts mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, and they put in the IVs and they start the medicines. They managed to save his life. But because of that HMO's decision, they were not able to save all of him. He ended up with gangrene of his hands and his feet and they had to be amputated. All because of that decision that that HMO made that prevented them from going to the nearest emergency room.

My colleagues, under federal law, that health plan which made that medical decision is responsible for nothing other than the cost of his amputations.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I remember a lot of people who came before our committee and other committees. I remember a young woman who, with her husband sitting next to her, broke down in tears in describing how when, she had been pregnant, towards the end of her pregnancy, and she had a high-risk pregnancy, her doctor said that she needed to be in the hospital so that they could monitor her little baby, who was yet unborn. And the HMO said, Oh no, no, that is not medically necessary. You don't need that. We are not going to pay for it. You go on home. You go home, and we will get you a nurse to